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A

LETTER

Written by the REVEREND

Mr. *Thomas Saunders*, *℥*

OF

KETTERING,

In his LAST ILLNESS.

Which was, by his Direction,

Publicly Read to his PEOPLE,

Immediately after his

FUNERAL SERMON.



NORTHAMPTON.

Printed in the YEAR 1736.

LETTER

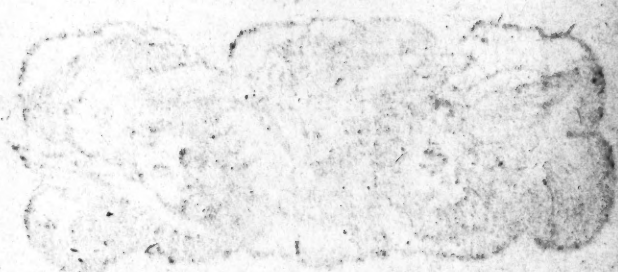
Mr. Thomas Smith

KENTING



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A

LETTER

Written by the REVEREND

Mr. Thomas Saunders.

to the **CHURCH** of **CHRIST** assembling in
Kettering, under the Care of the great and
good Shepherd.

Dear ly Beloved in our Lord,

YOU well know that for a great while I
have laboured under the afflicting Hand
of GOD; during a considerable Part of
which Time I could not tell but I might be
again permitted to speak to you in his Name:
when, at length, all reasonable Hopes of
Kind were cut off, I began to think of
writing a few Lines, to leave with you: My
weakness increasng, put me off those Thoughts,
till the Importunity of a Friend animated my
former Resolution, and set me upon it,

Providence favoured me with a Station of
 Service among you for upwards of 14 Years,
 during which Season I was led through a great
 Variety of trying Afflictions, under which as
 GOD was pleas'd to direct and support me in a
 very surprizing way, and at last delivered me
 so I must, in Justice, say, that you behaved to
 me in the most Affectionate and Christian Man-
 ner: You were Sharers with me in my Afflic-
 tions: Your Mouths, upon every Emergency
 were readily opened unto GOD for me: You
 rejoiced with me in the Removal of my Afflic-
 tion, and every favourable Turn given to my Af-
 fairs: And you bore the many Interruptions
 of my Service with unparallel'd Patience and Chea-
 rfulness. This could not fail of begetting in
 the greatest Endear'dness and tenderest Affection
 for you; so that my Soul was knit to you; a
 great Concern was to serve you; I never thought
 myself so happy as when I was labouring among
 you; and often begged, that, if it were con-
 sistent with the Will of GOD, I might live
 die amongst you: And I can now look back with
 Pleasure, to think that I was enabled to refuse
 the Solicitations which I have had to leave you

GOD has been seen amongst us ; there has
 been a Glory upon our Assemblies ; and the
 great Ends of a Gospel Ministry, such as the
 Conversion of some, and the Training up of
 others for a better World, I hope, have been,
 in some Measure, attained amongst us. But now
 I speak no more, nor you hear me any more :
 And yet, tho' I am gone from you, I persuade
 myself, from the chearful Attention you paid to
 my Services, while among you, that you will,
 at least, lend an Ear to what in this Manner I
 say to you. In this Respect you may truly
 apply that Passage, *Being dead, he yet speaketh.*
 What pity, methinks, it is, that your Affection
 and Concern for one another, bore no better
 Proportion to your Regards to me. The un-
 friendly and unbrotherly Way in which your
 unhappy Disputes about Property were managed,
 and the Temper that has been maintained since
 those Debates have been dropt, have been very
 grievous and bitter to me : But I choose rather
 to draw a Vail over that which will not bear the
 light, and enter upon some more pleasing and
 useful Subject. And now, my dear Friends,
 consider me just as I am, as one who has the
 ten-

tenderest Concern for you and yours, and as on
in the awful Views of another World.

*I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole
Counsel of GOD, as far as he was pleased to dis-
cover it unto me. If any of you wanted more
Light, don't blame me, for you had my All
and, I hope, I was daily conscious of making
my Application to the Father of Lights, from
whom every good and perfect Gift cometh. Light
and Purity are most agreeable Companions,
could never see that making great Boasts of our
Light, while the Tenour of our Conversation
evidenced that we were walking in Darknes
brought any Honour to our Profession. There
is a Sett of Men that Solomon long since put a
Mark upon; you have them according to his
Delineation, Prov. xxx. 12. *There is a Generation
that are pure in their own Eyes, and yet are not
washed from their Filthiness.**

I have no other Foundation for my own Soul
than what I have represented unto you, as the
only Foundation for you to build upon, and that
you know, is GOD's everlasting Love display'd
and

and drawn out in the sending of his Son, and all that he has done, is doing, and will do for us; and in the compleat Work of the Spirit, in forming us for, and bringing us unto, the full Possession and Enjoyment of all at last. And what a glorious Work, my Friends, is this! You have it in Miniature, when the Soul is born again; there is then every essential Part; but there must be a great many perfecting strokes before the Piece will be compleat, and fit to be set in the Presence-Chamber above. There are some four and knotty Pieces, that require more Hewing and Polishing than others. In some the Constitution Evil may, perhaps, not be removed, untill the Constitution itself be broken; which may, in some Measure, account for the Difference of the Dispensations that Good Men pass through in this World.

Upon this Foundation (if I am not mistaken, GOD grant I may not) I have built my Hopes of eternal Life, and that many Years since: But as I have frequently been brought back to view and examine what I have done, so I will truly and honestly tell you my Sentiments about it

it. You know that for some Years past I have had most violent and shocking Fits of the Cholic; these could not fail of awakening my Thoughts in some Degree, and giving me, at least, some cursory and transient Views of the State of my Soul; and at some times I entered as far as I could into those Enquiries, at least until I had a good Hope, through Grace, that all was well, and safe for Eternity. But when I was in perfect Health, and now under this long Affliction, I have had a Season to examine and strictly to enquire into the various Schemes that, under a Christian Profession, Men have severally adopted to themselves, to build their Hopes of Eternal Life upon: and, without any known or wilful Prejudice or Partiality, I must now declare to you, that, according to my Judgment, my Faith, and Experience, the Scheme I have so often and heartily recommended, is that which, above all others, you will find capable of giving you Support when you most need it. As to other Schemes, I shall only say in general, some of them make no Provision for the Corruptions of Human Nature; others, though they do, yet it is in such a way, as can never

never answer the End. Some of them shew no concern at all about the Rectoral Honour of the supreme Governor, and afford not the trembling of the least Relief under the painful Apprehensions of Justice. Some make the Whole of Christianity to consist in nothing more than a warm and confident Persuasion: And others, in effect, tell you, that you must be thorough *Stoicks*, if ever you are good *Christians*; or, in plain Words, Religion has little to do with the Passions, except it be to suppress them. So far therefore as I am capable of advising, you are best and safest upon that Foundation, whereupon, I hope, you have built; and which is the only one that GOD has laid: I have proved the Strength of it, under a great Variety of Trials, both as to Body, Mind, Relations, &c. and there I could always find Rest and Peace, and no where else. What I shall further say, and shall close with, is a few Hints, which, I hope, you will think of.

1. Think, that though I am now removed from you, yet not so gone, but that I must see you, and you must see me again, after a Season. We have each of us an Account to pass severally and se-

parately; and we have an Account to pass together: I must give an Account of the Use I made of all the different Talents which God gave me to occupy with amongst you; my Faith, my Zeal, my Conversation, my Charity, will all be enquired into, my Diligence, my Example, &c. Good Lord! who can stand such an awful, strict Scrutiny! What need of a powerful Mediator when we come to that Bar! But as Persons whose Services are *accepted in the Beloved*, so there leave that important Affair. In this Case you will be Witnesses for or against me. You must also give an Account of the Improvements you have made under a Gospel Ministry, for so many Years. How shall we look upon each other, if any of us should be disappointed in our good Hopes, and that Savour of the Knowledge of Christ, that has been a Savour of Life unto many Souls, prove only the Savour of Death unto ours! How sad! if I should then look with Horror and Consternation upon you, and you all come in as a Cloud of Witnesses against me, saying, *Lord, he wore thy Livery, was employ'd in thy Service, had the Reputation and Spect due to that; we could never detect him;*

*now all is discovered. The Apostle used some
 Austerity with himself, lest while he preached the
 Gospel of Salvation to others, he should perish.*
 But I trust, Brethren, this will not be the Case.
 On the other hand, how sad will it be, if I,
 that have had my Heart so much set upon your
 Happiness, and have laboured for it, even at the
 Expence of Life itself; if, after all, you must
 look upon me only as a Witness against any of
 you! Must I even stand forth, and say, Lord,
 for fourteen Years together I faithfully preached the
 Gospel to this Sinner, I told him of his corrupt and
 miserable State by Nature and Sin, and of that
 certain and dreadful Ruin that must come upon him,
 as the Consequence of it; that, unless his Heart
 was changed, his Nature renewed, and his Person
 justified, he must be undone for ever; and that this
 was only to be had in and through the Atonement
 and Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, seal'd and
 applied unto the Soul by the blessed Spirit, which
 must be felt and experienced in the great Work of
 Repentance towards God, and Faith in our Lord
 Jesus Christ, accompanied with an universal Sub-
 jection and Obedience unto him: And this he as-
 sented to as true; but, Lord, he never brought
 things

things home and close in a living Application. Brethren, I hope better things of you, and such as accompany Salvation, though I thus speak. On the other hand, let us but suppose we get safe home, what a happy Meeting shall we have in that World! Shall I not think you be frequently looking round about me upon the many that are arriving from the different Parts of the Earth, to see when any of my old Friends come? And will it not be an unspeakable Pleasure to both to meet there?

2. Think that my Removal is in order to make way for the Services of another amongst you, and may *the God of the Spirits of all Flesh*, who can find or make a Spirit meet for you, set a Man over you, much better qualified for such a Work, more faithful, diligent, and successful in it, than I may serve you and yours for many Years, and be a most extensive publick Blessing amongst you. In order to this, forgive the Freedom I use in a few short Advices,

Adv. 1. Don't forsake the assembling of yourselves together, to cry unto the Lord of the Harvest, to send a Labourer amongst you; a Loiterer,

will do you no good. Keep up, and all of you frequent Praying Meetings. *If you seek him, he will be found of you.* While GOD is with and amongst you, all will be well. I have never yet seen, but where Churches have waited upon GOD, and kept up their Applications to him, they have succeeded well at last, though sometimes it has been long first. *He has never said to the Seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain.*

2. Let your first Views of the Person you fix upon, be at what he himself is; I mean, endeavour, above all things, to have a Man of Religion, who shall be able to talk over the great things of GOD, in a feeling, experimental manner. If this be not the Case, whatever his Gifts may be, and how popular soever his Talents, vital Religion will dwindle under his Ministration; or if you should maintain the Name, the Thing will be lost: Neither the Orthodoxy of his Judgment, nor the Popularity of his Delivery, will ever compensate the Want of this: or can you expect a Blessing from Heaven, and that Success should attend the Service of that man, that is not inward with God, and hearty for

for him in what he does. *The Tree is known by
his Fruit.*

3. When you have satisfied your selves in the best manner you can, as to the Religious Part, then have regard to Prudence and Temper. If a Man have not Prudence, what will he do, that must necessarily be concerned with so many different Dispositions, Families under a great Variety of Circumstances, as well as those who are round about them. And if he is not a Man of Temper, you will have the less Pleasure and Advantage from his Conversation: Some will neglect him; others will be afraid to communicate their Sentiments unto him. How many otherwise famous Men, who seem'd to be formed for considerable Service, have miscarried here!

4. Remember that you are in a State of Imperfection your selves, and such, after all your Care will be the Person you have to labour among you; a Man subject to like Passions and Infirmities with your selves; one who, at times, may need your Pity and Forbearance, as you share in his. However, tho' this be a Reason against

ing too curious and tedious, yet, on the other,
don't be too hasty in your Determination. In
the Multitude of Counsellors there is Safety.
You are to make the Choice, and determine the
Affair: But, in order to your doing this with
Steadiness and Prudence, advise with some
grave, solid Persons, that you know are con-
cerned for your Welfare, and will give you the
best Direction they can.

5. I beseech and intreat you, *that you fall not*
out by the way, seeing you are Brethren. Be to-
gether, as the Primitive Church was, *with one*
Accord, as well as in one Place. O that of you
it might be said as of them, that Multitudes that
believed, *were of one Heart, and of one Soul.*
Bury, for ever bury all former Prejudices. How
would my Soul have rejoiced to have seen that
happy Day! But I please myself to think it will
soon be, and therefore shall use the Apostle's
Words, *If there be any Consolation in Christ, if*
any Comfort of Love, if any Fellowship of the
Spirit, if any Bowels and Mercy, fulfil ye my Joy,
that ye be like-minded, having the same Love, be-
ing of one Accord, of one Mind.

I had

I had a Design of saying something more, he that has cut me short in all the other Parts my Work, has done so in this last Attempt Respect and Labour of Love. If it would have any Force to what I have offer'd, I might further tell you, that this little, short Composure cost me immense Pains, my Weakness being very great, that you must look upon it as what is, only a broken Sketch of my Thoughts.

But they are the Words of a dying Man, and the real Sentiments of my Heart. I shall leave that Passage with you, *Acts xx. 32. And my Brethren, I commend you to God, and to the Word of his Grace, which is able to build you up, and give you an Inheritance among all them which are sanctified. Amen and Amen.*



F I N I S.

